

Michael F. Easley  
Governor



State of North Carolina  
Office of the Governor

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**EASLEY UNVEILS PRESCRIPTION DRUG ASSISTANCE PLAN FOR SENIORS**

**RALEIGH** – Gov. Mike Easley today unveiled his plan to help seniors cope with the high cost of prescription drugs.

“We have waited on Washington long enough. North Carolina is ready to move forward to assist seniors with the rising cost of prescription drugs,” said Easley. “Our seniors were there for us and we are going to be there for them now that they need us. They should not have to choose between the medicine they require and other basic necessities like food.”

A priority of Easley’s, the plan makes eligible those seniors with incomes less than \$17,180 a year and couples with incomes less than \$23,220. The plan will include treatment for three specific diseases: cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It is estimated that 71 percent of seniors suffer from at least one of these diseases. Seniors will be given an enrollment card to present to participating pharmacies giving them an annual 60 percent discount up to a maximum of \$1,000.

“This is an important first step in getting our seniors the medicine they deserve. I commend the members of the Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission for making this program a priority this year,” said Easley.

Last spring, Easley asked the Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission to provide the funds to assist seniors with the rising cost of prescription drugs. In a meeting earlier this morning, the commission voted to approve \$32 million for prescription drugs and \$3 million to educate and counsel seniors for the first year of the program.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will administer the program and plans to enroll up to 100,000 seniors by the spring of 2002. For more information about the program or to request an application contact DHHS at 1-800-662-7030 or log onto [www.dhhs.state.nc.us](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us).

Details on Easley’s plan are attached.

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